

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1156

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 0662

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AF

SUBJECT: LOYA JIRGAH ELECTIONS

REF: KABUL 0260

1. SUMMARY: ELECTIONS TO THE FORTHCOMING LOYA JIRGAH (NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY) TO APPROVE AFGHANISTAN'S NEW CONSTITUTION AND POLICIES OF THE DAOUD REGIME WERE COMPLETED JANUARY 25. THEY WERE EXTENDED FIVE DAYS TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A SECOND ROUND OF SELECTIONS IN KABUL AND PARWAN PROVINCES. THIS SECOND ROUND BECAME REQUIRED WHEN PRESIDENT DAOUD MOVED ANGRILY AND SUDDENLY ON JANUARY 19 TO INVALIDATE ELECTIONS ALREADY HELD IN THE TWO IMPORTANT PROVINCES AND TO SACK THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS INVOLVED -- PROVIDING EXCITEMENT AND A FUND OF RUMOR MATERIAL TO WHAT HAD BEEN ASSUMED AN ORCHESTRATED, NO-SURPRISE EVENT.

EXCEPT FOR KABUL AND PARWAN PROVINCES NATION-WIDE LOYA JIRGAH ELECTIONS SEEM TO HAVE PROCEEDED SMOOTHLY. GREAT "POPULAR MANIFESTATIONS" AVOR-
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ING THE REPUBLIC AND ITS PRINCIPLES AND THE LOYA JIRGAH TOOK PLACE IN KABUL AND KANDAHAR. DESPITE FACT THAT KABUL DEMONSTRATIONS TOOK PLACE SAME DAY AS ILL-FATED LOYA JIRGAH ELECTIONS (JANUARY 13), MANIFESTATIONS WERE WIDELY TOUTED AS EXPRESSIONS OF PEOPLES' WILL AND DAOUD APPEARED PUBLICLY IN FRONT OF HIS RESIDENCE TO RECEIVE CROWD'S TRIBUTE.

REAL STORY OF WHY KABUL AND PARWAN ELECTIONS
SCRAPPED WILL PERHAPS NEVER COME OUT, BUT BEST
ESTIMATE WE HAVE IS THAT GOVERNORS MUFFED CHORE-
OGRAPHY AND FAILED TO CREATE APPEARANCE OF POPULAR
SUPPORT AND TRADITIONAL PROCESS. IN SUBSEQUENT
KABUL ELECTIONS ONE NEWCOMER APPEARED AND TWO
EARLIER ELECTED CANDIDATES WERE ONCE AGAIN AFFIRMED.

EXCEPT FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF PERSONS SLATED TO BE
DIRECTLY APPOINTED BY PRESIDENT DAOUD THE CAST IS
THUS MADE FOR THE JIRGAH CONVENING JANUARY 30.
MOST SESSIONS, IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED, WILL BE PUBLIC
AND DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES AND PRESS ARE TO BE
INVITED.

EVENTS OF PAST TWO WEEKS CONTINUE TO INDICATE
THAT LOYA JIRGAH WILL BE A CAREFULLY MANAGED EVENT,
BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE MANAGEMENT WILL BE SO
COMPLETE AS TO COST THE EVENT ITS ENTIRE CREDI-
BILITY. END SUMMARY.

2. ELECTIONS TO THE AFGHAN LOYA JIRGAH (NATIONAL
CONSTITUTENT ASSEMBLY) ENDED TUESDAY, JANUARY 25,
WITH THE COMPLETION OF SPECIAL ELECTIONS IN KABUL
AND PARWAN PROVINCES TO REPLACE PERSONS SELECTED
JANUARY 13 IN A PROCESS SUBSEQUENTLY ANNULLED.
A FINAL LIST OF ELECTED DEPUTIES HAS BEEN RELEASED
AND WILL BE FORWARDED BY SUBSEQUENT AIRGRAM.
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3. LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS ENDORSING REPUBLICAN
REGIME AND CALLING OF LOYA JIRGAH ACCOMPANIED
ELECTION CEREMONIES IN KABUL AND KANDAHAR. BEST
REPORTS INDICATE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE CAREFULLY
ORGANIZED FROM AMONG GOVERNMENT WORKERS. LARGE
NUMBERS OF POLICE IN MUFTI -- RECOGNIZABLE BY
DISTINCTIVE FOOTGEAR -- CONSTITUTED KABUL CORE
GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS, WITH NUMBERS AUGMENTED
BY EMPLOYEES OF SEVERAL MINISTRIES (INCLUDING
INTERIOR, EDUCATION, FINANCE, THE LAND REFORM ADMIN-
ISTRATION AND CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY) TO WHOM QUOTAS
WERE APPARENTLY ASSIGNED. NO ACCURATE ESTIMATE
OF THE NUMBER OF TOTAL PARTICIPANTS WAS MADE,
ALTHOUGH ONE DIPLOMAT REPORTED APPROXIMATELY
2,000 PEOPLE MARCHED BY HIS EMBASSY ENROUTE TO
THE PALACE EOMPLEX WHERE PRESIDENT DAOUD RESIDES
AND FROM WHICH HE EMERGED TO ENCOURAGE DEMONSTRA-
TORS.

4. THE KABUL "ELECTIONS" OF JANUARY 13 PRODUCED A SUBSEQUENT MINOR SENSATION. AFTER PUBLICATION OF ELECTED SLATE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON JANUARY 18, KABUL MEDIA ANNOUNCED FOLLOWING EVENING (AS REPORTED BY FBIS PER STATE 15597) THAT "LOYA JIRGAH REPRESENTATIVES' ELECTIONS HAVING BEEN UNDEMOCRATIC IN KABUL CITY ... AND IN PARWAN PROVINCES ... THE HEAD OF STATE CONSIDERS THIS APPROACH TO ELECTIONS IN THE MENTIONED AREAS AS CONTRARY TO THE SPIRIT OF THE REPUBLIC, AND REJECTS THEM, AND DISMISSES BOTH THE GOVERNORS OF KABUL AND PARWAN". NEW ELECTIONS WERE CALLED FOR THE AFFECTED DISTRICTS.

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5. EXACT REASON FOR THIS TURN OF EVENTS IS UNCLEAR AND IS STILL BEING DEBATED. ALL CANDIDATES FOR THE LOYA JIRGAH HAD PRESUMABLY BEEN SCREENED AND APPROVED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, AND IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT DAOUD PERSONALLY APPROVED THE FINAL LISTS. WE SUSPECT -- AT LEAST IN THE CASE OF KABUL -- THAT THE GOVERNOR FAILED PROPERLY TO OBSERVE SOME OF THE NICETIES IN STAGING INTENDED TO SEAL THIS BASICALLY TRADITIONAL PROCESS. ONE REPORT (THE ONE WE CREDIT) SUGGESTS THAT THE CROWD AT THE ELECTION SITE IN KABUL OVER-ENTHUSIASTICALLY MARCHED OFF TO JOIN THE PRINCIPAL DEMONSTRATION BEFORE SOME FORM OF VOTING COULD ACTUALLY TAKE PLACE. CANDIDATES WERE DECLARED ELECTED NONETHELESS, BUT THE OBVIOUS FAILURE TO "VOTE" WAS WIDELY COMMENTED.

PRESIDENT DAOUD WAS REPORTEDLY OUTRAGED. ANOTHER KABUL RUMOR IS THAT ONE OF THE PERSONS ELECTED, ENGINEER MOHAMMAD KABIR, HEAD OF THE HIGH ECONOMIC COUNCIL (AND, INCIDENTALLY, A DAOUD LOYALIST OF YEARS' STANDING) WAS REJECTED FOR BEING ACTING KABUL GOVERNOR HASHEN SAFI'S BROTHER-IN-LAW. THIS RUMOR WAS GIVEN CREDENCE WHEN IN SUBSEQUENT ELECTIONS KABIR WAS DROPPED WHILE THE OTHER TWO PREVIOUSLY

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ELECTED PERSONS WERE RE-AFFIRMED. THE IDEA HOWEVER OF DAOUD'S NOT KNOWING OF THE KABIR-SAFI RELATIONSHIP SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, AND WE BELIEVE KABIR'S SELECTION HAD TO HAVE BEEN EARLIER SANCTIONED.

6. THE SECOND SET OF KABUL ELECTIONS, HELD IN THREE CITY LOCATIONS ON JANUARY 25, GIVE SOME IDEA OF HOW ELECTIONS PROBABLY WERE CONDUCTED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. DURING THE MORNING, FIVE OR SIX CANDIDATES ARRIVED AT EACH OF THE ELECTION POINTS ACCOMPANIED BY A CROWD OF SUPPORTERS. EACH CANDIDATE WAS INTRODUCED AND GAVE A BRIEF SPEECH IN TURN. CANDIDATES THEN CAUCUSED IN SEPARATE AREAS WITH THEIR SUPPORTERS, WHEREUPON ONE AFTER ANOTHER BEGAN TO ANNOUNCE WITHDRAWAL IN FAVOR OF ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE REMAINING CANDIDATES. ULTIMATELY, ONLY ONE CANDIDATE WAS LEFT IN ONE LOCATION, TWO IN ANOTHER (WHERE THE CANDIDATE WITH LARGEST GROUP OF SUPPORTERS STANDING AROUND WAS DECLARED THE WINNER). TWO OF THE THREE PREVIOUSLY ELECTED DELEGATES, MS. KUBRA NOORZAI, PRESIDENT OF THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE, AND DR. ABDUL FATAH HAMRAH, A MEDICAL PROFESSOR, WERE AGAIN SELECTED. MOHAMMAD SHARIF (ALSO POPULARLY KNOWN AS "MALEK" SHARIF AFSHAR FOR HIS POSITION OF LEADERSHIP IN A SUBURB OF KABUL MOSTLY INHABITED BY SHIA HAZARAS) WAS ELECTED IN PLACE OF KABIR.

7. SESSIONS OF THE FORTHCOMING LOYA JIRGAH HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED TO BE OPEN, EXCEPT FOR SOME WHICH WILL BE VOTED "IN CAMERA" BY THE PARTICIPANTS THEMSELVES. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT THE AMBASSADOR WILL BE FORMALLY INVITED TO ATTEND THE OPENING AND CLOSING SESSIONS, AND THAT HE MAY APPOINT AN ALTERNATE FOR INTERVENING DAYS. ADDITIONALLY, SIXTY PLACES WILL

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BE AVAILABLE TO AFGHAN OBSERVERS WHO MAY MAKE APPLICATION FOR TICKETS OF ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE.

8. THE EVENTS OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS HAVE RE-INFORCED OUR BELIEF THAT THE LOYA JIRGAH WILL BE A CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED AFFAIR, BUT ONE NEVERTHELESS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A NATIONAL EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR DAOUD AND HIS REGIME DESPITE THE UNDERSTANDABLE CYNICISM OF MANY ELEMENTS IN THE MORE SOPHISTICATED KABUL POPULATION, WE SUSPECT THAT A MAJORITY OF PROVINCIAL AFGHANS WILL SEE THE LOYA JIRGAH -- A TRADITIONAL AFGHAN INSTITUTION BUT NEVER A "DEMOCRATIC" ONE -- AS A MEANS FOR ACCORDING LEGITIMACY TO THE DAOUD REPUBLIC AND ITS POLICIES.
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